

The Psychological Needs of Gifted Children: Addressing Asynchronous Development and Social-Emotional Challenges

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Article Info

Received: April 12, 2025

Revised: June 07, 2025

Accepted: July 03, 2025

Online Version: October 25, 2025

Abstract

Gifted children often exhibit asynchronous development, where cognitive, emotional, and social growth occur at uneven rates, creating complex psychological needs that are frequently misunderstood in educational and familial contexts. This developmental asynchrony may result in social-emotional vulnerabilities such as heightened sensitivity, perfectionism, and difficulties in peer relationships. The study aims to explore the psychological needs of gifted children with a focus on addressing the impact of asynchronous development on their social-emotional well-being. A qualitative research design employing phenomenological analysis was utilized to examine the lived experiences of 25 gifted students aged 8–14, selected from specialized education programs. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, behavioral observations, and teacher reflections, followed by thematic coding. The results revealed three major themes: (1) emotional intensity as both a strength and source of distress, (2) social incongruence and peer isolation resulting from developmental disparities, and (3) the need for adaptive counseling and differentiated emotional support. The study concludes that educational and psychological interventions must be tailored to the unique developmental trajectories of gifted children, emphasizing emotional regulation, self-concept development, and social integration. Understanding asynchronous growth is essential for fostering balanced psychological and academic development among gifted learners.

Keywords: Counseling Intervention, Gifted Children, Psychological Being



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Journal Homepage

<https://research.adra.ac.id/index.php/rpoc>

ISSN: (P: [3048-0078](https://doi.org/10.70177/rpoc.v2i5.2660)) - (E: [3048-1937](https://doi.org/10.70177/rpoc.v2i5.2660))

How to cite:

Rahman, A, I., Chai, N & Som, R. (2025). The Psychological Needs of Gifted Children: Addressing Asynchronous Development and Social-Emotional Challenges. *Research Psychologie, Orientation et Conseil*, 2(5), 265–280.
<https://doi.org/10.70177/rpoc.v2i5.2660>

Published by:

Yayasan Adra Karima Hubbi

INTRODUCTION

Gifted children possess advanced intellectual or creative capacities that distinguish them from their age peers, often allowing them to perform at levels significantly beyond standard developmental expectations. Despite these strengths, their psychological and emotional development frequently follows a different trajectory, resulting in what is known as asynchronous development. This condition describes the uneven growth between cognitive, emotional, social, and physical domains, causing internal dissonance and external adjustment difficulties (Jarrell & Bryce, 2025; Nechifor et al., 2025). The coexistence of extraordinary intellectual ability with emotional intensity or social immaturity creates a complex developmental landscape that challenges both children and those responsible for their upbringing and education. Understanding these unique developmental patterns is critical for educators, counselors, and parents who seek to provide environments that nurture the whole child rather than solely their intellectual abilities.

The concept of asynchronous development has received increasing attention in recent years as researchers recognize that giftedness is not a uniformly positive experience. Gifted children often experience heightened awareness, perfectionism, and sensitivity that make them particularly vulnerable to stress, frustration, and self-doubt. Their exceptional cognitive capacity enables them to perceive abstract ideas and moral dilemmas at an early age, yet their emotional maturity may not align with such insights (W. Zhang et al., 2025; Y. Zhang et al., 2025). This developmental imbalance can manifest as anxiety, social withdrawal, or existential questioning. The phenomenon thus complicates the simplistic assumption that intellectual advancement automatically ensures emotional stability or psychological resilience. Addressing the implications of this developmental misalignment is essential for fostering balanced well-being in gifted youth.

The increasing prevalence of research on gifted education underscores a growing recognition of the psychological dimensions of giftedness. Schools and families have historically prioritized cognitive enrichment through acceleration and advanced curricula, often at the expense of emotional and social development. As educational systems strive to support diversity and inclusivity, understanding the psychological profile of gifted children becomes a moral and pedagogical necessity (Mantovani et al., 2025; Xia et al., 2025). The issue is not only about identifying high potential but also ensuring that these children receive the guidance necessary to navigate the emotional complexity associated with their abilities. In this context, the current study situates itself within the broader discourse on holistic education one that values the intersection of intellect, emotion, and social adaptation.

Gifted children face distinctive psychological challenges that are often overlooked or misunderstood by educators and caregivers. Their asynchronous development creates a mismatch between cognitive competence and emotional regulation, leading to experiences of frustration, alienation, and underachievement. Many gifted children struggle to find peers who share their interests or depth of thinking, resulting in social isolation and feelings of “being different.” Teachers and counselors frequently misinterpret these children’s emotional intensity or behavioral irregularities as immaturity or defiance rather than manifestations of developmental imbalance (Yan et al., 2025; Zhao & Chen, 2025). The lack of understanding about the emotional implications of giftedness contributes to a cycle of unmet psychological needs that may lead to academic disengagement or emotional exhaustion.

A major issue lies in the limited availability of support systems tailored to the unique emotional profiles of gifted children. Conventional counseling frameworks often assume developmental uniformity and may not account for the advanced cognitive insight or heightened sensitivity characteristic of this population. As a result, gifted students frequently receive interventions designed for general populations that fail to address their asynchronous growth patterns. Furthermore, educational practices often emphasize achievement over well-being, neglecting the affective domains that are integral to the healthy functioning of gifted individuals (Ding et al., 2025; Hou et al., 2025). This disjunction between cognitive support and emotional care reveals a significant gap in how educational systems conceptualize and respond to giftedness.

The problem also extends to the home environment, where parents of gifted children may struggle to balance high expectations with emotional understanding. Many families report difficulty in managing their children's perfectionism, mood fluctuations, and existential questioning. These parental challenges, coupled with insufficient institutional support, create environments where gifted children's needs are recognized intellectually but not emotionally. The consequences of this neglect are evident in increasing rates of anxiety, depression, and social maladjustment among gifted youth. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive understanding of their psychological needs within the framework of asynchronous development and social-emotional learning (Fernandes & Katayev, 2025; Wu et al., 2025).

The primary objective of this study is to explore the psychological needs of gifted children by analyzing how asynchronous development shapes their emotional and social experiences. The research seeks to identify the key areas of vulnerability and resilience that characterize this population. Through qualitative analysis, the study aims to illuminate the lived experiences of gifted children, capturing how they perceive their own developmental disparities and how these perceptions affect their self-concept and relationships (Raible, 2025; H. Zhang et al., 2025). The research further intends to translate these insights into recommendations for educational and counseling practices that are responsive to the complexities of gifted development.

Another objective of the study is to investigate the social-emotional challenges associated with giftedness, including heightened sensitivity, perfectionism, and difficulty in peer relationships. By examining the interplay between emotional intelligence, self-regulation, and social adaptability, the research seeks to understand the psychological mechanisms that either support or hinder gifted children's well-being. These findings are expected to provide practical implications for educators and mental health professionals in designing interventions that foster emotional balance alongside intellectual growth (Adams et al., 2025; Birati et al., 2025).

The final objective involves promoting a paradigm shift in gifted education from an achievement-oriented model to a holistic developmental framework. This approach emphasizes the integration of academic enrichment with social-emotional learning and psychological counseling. The study aspires to contribute to the growing movement within educational psychology that views gifted children not as anomalies of intellect but as individuals requiring nuanced and empathetic support systems. The ultimate goal is to inform the development of policies and practices that recognize the interdependence between giftedness and psychological health (Cho et al., 2025; Eicher et al., 2025).

Existing literature on gifted education primarily emphasizes cognitive and academic dimensions, often neglecting the emotional and psychological complexities of gifted

development. While numerous studies have explored intellectual acceleration and curriculum differentiation, far fewer have examined the inner emotional world of gifted children. The concept of asynchronous development, though well-documented, has not been sufficiently connected to practical models of psychological intervention (Din et al., 2025; Figueroa et al., 2025). Current educational and psychological frameworks tend to treat giftedness as a static trait rather than a dynamic developmental process influenced by social and emotional factors. This narrow focus limits the understanding of how giftedness manifests in everyday experiences and how it interacts with broader developmental contexts.

A second gap concerns the underrepresentation of the voices of gifted children themselves in research. Much of the existing literature relies on teacher or parent reports, which, while valuable, may overlook the subjective experiences of the children. The absence of child-centered perspectives hinders a deeper understanding of how gifted individuals interpret and cope with their asynchronous growth. Furthermore, the few qualitative studies available are often contextually restricted, focusing on specific educational settings or cultural backgrounds. The current study addresses this limitation by adopting a phenomenological approach that foregrounds the children's own narratives as primary sources of insight (Duncan et al., 2025; Falkevych & Lisniak, 2025).

Another gap lies in the lack of integration between theories of gifted education and psychological counseling. Most counseling models do not adequately consider the emotional intensity or existential sensitivity characteristic of gifted individuals. As a result, interventions are often reactive rather than preventive. This study aims to bridge this theoretical and practical divide by situating asynchronous development within a broader framework of psychological well-being and social-emotional learning (Liu et al., 2025; Zaky et al., 2025). By integrating insights from developmental psychology, education, and counseling, the research seeks to fill an interdisciplinary void that has long limited the effectiveness of gifted support programs.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrative approach to understanding giftedness as both a cognitive and emotional phenomenon. Unlike prior research that isolates intellectual ability from affective experience, this study conceptualizes asynchronous development as the central lens for interpreting gifted children's psychological needs. This holistic framework recognizes that giftedness involves a complex interplay of intellect, emotion, and social adaptation (Radville et al., 2025; J. Shi et al., 2025). The study's focus on social-emotional balance and psychological resilience introduces a new dimension to the discourse on gifted education, positioning emotional well-being as an essential indicator of gifted development rather than a peripheral concern.

The research also offers methodological innovation through its qualitative phenomenological design. By privileging the lived experiences of gifted children, the study provides a more nuanced understanding of how they internalize and navigate their developmental asynchrony. This approach allows for rich, contextualized insights that quantitative assessments may overlook. The combination of in-depth interviews, observational data, and reflective teacher accounts ensures that the findings capture multiple perspectives while maintaining the authenticity of children's voices. This methodological rigor contributes to the field by demonstrating the value of child-centered qualitative inquiry in psychological and educational research.

The justification for this research rests on its potential to inform more empathetic and effective educational and counseling practices. As schools and parents grapple with how best to

nurture gifted children, there is a pressing need for evidence-based frameworks that integrate emotional support with intellectual stimulation. The study's findings are expected to influence curriculum design, teacher training, and counseling protocols, fostering environments where gifted children can thrive both cognitively and emotionally. By addressing an overlooked dimension of gifted development, this research contributes to the advancement of educational psychology and supports the global movement toward inclusive and holistic approaches to gifted education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study applied a qualitative phenomenological approach to investigate the psychological needs of gifted children, particularly those experiencing asynchronous development and various social-emotional difficulties. The phenomenological framework was selected because it enables researchers to explore the meanings embedded within participants' lived experiences, emotional responses, and personal interpretations in a more comprehensive manner than quantitative approaches (Misra et al., 2025; Y. Shi & Wang, 2025). Through this perspective, the research aimed to understand how gifted children interpret and manage their emotional intensity, social relationships, and internal conflicts while identifying the coping strategies and support systems that contribute to their psychological adjustment. The study also emphasized the importance of examining the interaction between cognitive advancement and emotional development in the daily experiences of gifted learners.

Research Design

The research employed a qualitative phenomenological design to obtain an in-depth understanding of the subjective experiences of gifted children regarding their emotional and social development. This design was considered appropriate because phenomenology focuses on exploring how individuals construct meaning from their personal experiences and interactions within their environment (Misra et al., 2025; Y. Shi & Wang, 2025). The study concentrated on uncovering patterns related to asynchronous development, including emotional sensitivity, perfectionism, social incongruence, and psychological adaptation. By utilizing this design, the researcher was able to capture rich descriptions of participants' perspectives and emotional realities that may not be fully represented through statistical measurement alone.

Research Target/Subject

The participants of this study consisted of 25 gifted children aged between 8 and 14 years, including 13 boys and 12 girls, who were enrolled in gifted education centers and public schools implementing enrichment programs. Participants were identified through psychological assessments indicating IQ scores above 130, supported by teacher recommendations and academic evaluations. To obtain diverse perspectives, the sample represented various socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Purposive sampling techniques were used to select participants who demonstrated characteristics of asynchronous development, such as advanced cognitive abilities combined with emotional intensity, heightened sensitivity, or perfectionistic behaviors (Thoman et al., 2025; Tomanović et al., 2025). Ethical considerations were carefully maintained through obtaining parental consent and institutional approval before the study commenced.

Research Procedure

The research procedure was conducted through four major stages, namely preparation, data collection, data analysis, and validation. During the preparation stage, the researcher developed and refined research instruments, coordinated with participating schools, and secured ethical clearance from the institutional review board. The data collection stage involved conducting individual in-depth interviews in school counseling rooms, with each session lasting approximately 45–60 minutes. Observations were also carried out in classroom and extracurricular contexts to capture participants' natural behaviors and social interactions. Throughout the observation process, the researcher adopted a non-intrusive role to minimize interference with participants' activities. All interview sessions were audio-recorded with participants' permission and complemented with detailed field notes to strengthen data accuracy (Benigno et al., 2025; Zhou et al., 2025).

Instruments and Data Collection Techniques

The study utilized several instruments, including semi-structured interview guidelines, observation sheets, and reflective journals. The interview protocol contained open-ended questions aimed at exploring participants' emotional experiences, social relationships, and self-perceptions related to giftedness. Questions such as “How do you feel when others misunderstand your ideas?” and “What strategies help you manage overwhelming emotions?” were included to encourage detailed responses. Observation sheets were designed to identify behavioral tendencies during group interactions, including withdrawal, empathy, leadership, frustration, and social responsiveness. In addition, reflective journals completed by teachers and school counselors were used to document emotional and social incidents observed over a six-week period. To ensure validity and appropriateness, all instruments underwent expert review by three psychologists specializing in gifted education, focusing on clarity, developmental suitability, and contextual relevance.

Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis based on Colaizzi's seven-step phenomenological framework, which included familiarization with the data, identification of significant statements, formulation of meanings, clustering of themes, development of exhaustive descriptions, participant validation, and final interpretation. The analysis process aimed to identify recurring themes associated with gifted children's psychological experiences and adaptive behaviors. To strengthen credibility and trustworthiness, triangulation techniques were implemented by comparing findings from interviews, observations, and reflective journals. The analysis ultimately generated three principal thematic categories, namely emotional intensity, social incongruence, and coping adaptability, which represented the central dimensions of participants' lived experiences. Ethical principles, including confidentiality and sensitivity toward participants' emotional conditions, were consistently maintained throughout the interpretive process to ensure authentic and contextually accurate representation of the findings (Brazier et al., 2025; Chen & Wu, 2025).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis revealed three major themes describing the psychological needs and experiences of gifted children: emotional intensity, social incongruence, and adaptive coping. Descriptive data were derived from 25 participants, supported by 75 observation entries and 40 teacher journal reflections collected over six weeks. Quantitative indicators, drawn from

background questionnaires, demonstrated that 84% of participants self-reported experiencing heightened emotional reactions in academic or social settings, while 68% indicated difficulties maintaining friendships due to differing interests or communication styles. Table 1 presents the summary of dominant emotional and social characteristics among participants.

Table 1. Summary of Emotional and Social Characteristics of Gifted Children (n = 25)

Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Description
High Emotional Sensitivity	21	84	Easily affected by criticism or injustice
Perfectionistic Tendencies	19	76	Exhibits anxiety over small mistakes
Peer Relationship Difficulties	17	68	Prefers solitude or older companions
Strong Moral Awareness	15	60	Displays concern for fairness and empathy
Intense Focus on Interests	14	56	Becomes deeply absorbed in self-chosen topics

The descriptive data indicate that the majority of gifted children in this study demonstrate disproportionate emotional sensitivity relative to their cognitive maturity. Participants reported experiencing intense joy, anger, or sadness in situations their peers considered trivial. Teachers observed frequent self-criticism and frustration during academic tasks, particularly when children felt misunderstood or failed to meet self-imposed standards. These patterns align with earlier findings on emotional overexcitability in gifted populations, confirming that intellectual precocity often coexists with emotional vulnerability. The quantitative distribution of traits underscores that emotional regulation represents a critical developmental challenge requiring targeted psychological support.

The explanation of the data emphasizes that asynchronous development serves as the underlying mechanism connecting cognitive advancement with emotional turbulence. Gifted children's ability to process abstract ideas amplifies their emotional responsiveness, as they perceive moral or existential dilemmas earlier than peers. This cognitive-emotional mismatch creates an inner tension between advanced reasoning and limited emotional endurance. For instance, children capable of analyzing complex ethical issues often lack the coping maturity to manage associated distress. The data therefore suggest that intellectual superiority, without corresponding emotional scaffolding, predisposes gifted children to psychological disequilibrium that may manifest as anxiety, irritability, or withdrawal.

The descriptive analysis of social adaptation revealed significant variation in how participants navigated interpersonal relationships. Interviews and observations showed that 68% of children experienced peer rejection or social isolation. Many preferred solitary activities or gravitated toward older peers whose interests better matched their intellectual level. Teachers noted that while gifted students frequently assumed leadership roles in structured academic tasks, they struggled to engage in unstructured social play. These behavioral patterns suggest that advanced cognitive processing does not guarantee social maturity; rather, it often accentuates social disparities within age-homogeneous peer groups. The combination of social self-awareness and relational challenges forms a recurrent theme in the psychosocial adjustment of gifted children.

The inferential analysis identified correlations between emotional sensitivity, perfectionism, and social incongruence. Children who exhibited strong perfectionistic tendencies also reported higher levels of peer conflict and emotional frustration. Observational data indicated that rigid self-expectations contributed to social withdrawal when performance failed to meet personal standards. Teachers' journal reflections confirmed that emotionally intense students required more frequent reassurance and personalized guidance. These findings infer that perfectionism functions as both a motivational and maladaptive trait driving achievement but also increasing vulnerability to stress. The inferential relationship between internal standards and social-emotional regulation suggests that interventions must target cognitive reframing alongside emotional support.

The relational analysis across data sources revealed a cyclical interaction between emotional, cognitive, and social domains. High intellectual ability heightened self-awareness, which intensified emotional reactivity and influenced social interactions. Emotional distress, in turn, reinforced withdrawal behaviors, further limiting social learning opportunities. This dynamic illustrates that gifted children's psychological needs cannot be compartmentalized but must be understood holistically. The integration of data from interviews, observations, and journals provided strong evidence that emotional and social difficulties stem from developmental asynchrony rather than inherent personality flaws. The relational data thus support the theoretical assertion that psychological imbalance arises when environmental expectations fail to align with a child's asynchronous growth trajectory.

The case study component of this research provided detailed insights into individual experiences that exemplify broader patterns. One case involved "S.A.," a 10-year-old boy identified with exceptional verbal reasoning skills but frequent classroom outbursts. Despite intellectual leadership, he expressed frustration over peers' inability to "think fast enough" and often isolated himself during group tasks. Counseling sessions revealed intense perfectionism and fear of failure rooted in self-comparison with adults rather than age peers. Another participant, "L.M.," a 12-year-old girl, exhibited profound empathy and moral concern but struggled with anxiety and self-doubt. She reported feeling "too different" and expressed a desire for connection despite discomfort in social interactions. Both cases highlight how giftedness amplifies emotional depth while simultaneously creating relational barriers.

The explanation of the case study findings indicates that individual variability in emotional regulation depends heavily on environmental responsiveness. Participants receiving consistent emotional validation from parents or teachers displayed stronger resilience and coping mechanisms. Conversely, those whose emotional expressions were dismissed as "overreactions" exhibited heightened anxiety and defensive behaviors. The data confirm that environmental attunement defined as adults' sensitivity to the emotional states of gifted children serves as a protective factor against social-emotional maladjustment. This underscores the importance of psychoeducational training for teachers and parents to foster supportive relational climates that accommodate both cognitive and emotional complexity.

The interpretation of these findings highlights the intricate interplay between intellect and emotion in shaping the psychological profile of gifted children. The coexistence of advanced reasoning and emotional immaturity generates developmental tension that requires integrated support strategies. The evidence demonstrates that psychological needs extend beyond cognitive stimulation; they encompass self-regulation, empathy development, and social acceptance. Gifted children thrive when educational and familial contexts acknowledge the

multidimensional nature of their growth. Interventions that balance intellectual challenge with emotional nurturance are crucial for preventing maladaptive perfectionism, social isolation, and burnout.

The overall interpretation concludes that asynchronous development defines the psychological landscape of gifted childhood. The results affirm that giftedness should not be treated merely as an academic phenomenon but as a complex developmental condition involving interdependent emotional and social dimensions. Recognizing and addressing these dynamics can transform educational practice and counseling approaches, ensuring that gifted children receive balanced support tailored to their holistic growth. The findings advocate for the redefinition of gifted education to include emotional literacy, self-awareness, and social competence as integral components of nurturing exceptional potential.

The findings of this study revealed that the psychological needs of gifted children are deeply influenced by asynchronous development, which creates an imbalance between intellectual maturity and emotional growth. Data analysis identified three major patterns: emotional intensity, social incongruence, and coping adaptability that define their internal experiences. The majority of participants demonstrated high cognitive awareness paired with emotional hypersensitivity, leading to challenges in self-regulation and peer interaction. The results further showed that perfectionism and moral idealism function as double-edged traits: while they motivate achievement, they also contribute to frustration and self-doubt when expectations are unmet (Blanton et al., 2025; Orozco Jurado et al., 2025). The observation data confirmed that these children experience heightened emotional reactions to perceived failure or social rejection, validating the theoretical link between giftedness and emotional overexcitability. Collectively, the results illustrate that giftedness represents not only advanced intellect but also a heightened level of psychological complexity.

The patterns that emerged also emphasized the role of environmental factors in shaping emotional adaptation. Children who received consistent emotional validation from teachers and parents exhibited greater resilience and empathy compared to those whose emotions were dismissed or misunderstood. The findings therefore underscore the importance of relational attunement in supporting gifted children's well-being. The presence of structured yet flexible learning environments allowed students to express their emotions constructively while maintaining intellectual challenge. This highlights that the interplay between personal traits and environmental responsiveness largely determines the psychosocial adjustment of gifted individuals. The study confirms that emotional development among gifted children is not autonomous but dynamically dependent on contextual understanding and support.

The results of this study align with and expand upon prior literature on the social-emotional dimensions of giftedness. Research by Silverman (2013) and Neihart (2021) similarly identified asynchronous development as a defining characteristic that underpins emotional vulnerability in gifted populations. Consistent with Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration, the findings validate that emotional intensity in gifted children serves as both a developmental challenge and a source of creative potential. However, this study contributes a deeper understanding by demonstrating how perfectionism and moral reasoning amplify self-imposed pressure and interpersonal strain. While previous studies often framed emotional sensitivity as a liability, the current analysis positions it as a developmental catalyst suggesting that appropriate guidance can transform emotional depth into empathy and purpose. The data

therefore bridge the gap between deficit-focused and strength-based interpretations of giftedness.

The study diverges from earlier research by emphasizing the contextual variability of emotional adjustment. Unlike studies that generalized gifted children as socially maladjusted, this research shows that maladaptation arises primarily when environmental expectations are misaligned with developmental asynchrony. Participants with emotionally responsive adults reported lower anxiety levels and greater social satisfaction, indicating that external understanding mitigates internal distress. This finding challenges deterministic perspectives that associate giftedness with inevitable socio-emotional difficulties. Instead, it advances a relational model of gifted development in which emotional well-being is co-constructed through empathetic adult guidance and peer acceptance (Su et al., 2025; Vargas-Monroy et al., 2025). The results therefore extend current theories by illustrating that social-emotional outcomes are contingent on the quality of ecological support rather than cognitive divergence alone.

The reflection on these findings suggests that the results signify a deeper transformation in how giftedness should be conceptualized and supported. The evidence indicates that intellectual advancement cannot be separated from its psychological consequences. The asynchronous pattern uncovered here serves as a developmental marker of both potential and vulnerability, symbolizing the dual nature of giftedness as a source of strength and strain. The intense emotional world of these children reflects an accelerated awareness of complexity, which, if unacknowledged, may turn inward as anxiety or alienation. Recognizing this duality reveals that the emotional lives of gifted children are not pathological deviations but natural outcomes of advanced cognition interacting with underdeveloped affective regulation. This reframing situates emotional intensity within a developmental continuum rather than a clinical deficit.

The results also represent a broader cultural indicator of how educational systems define success and adaptation. The emotional imbalance observed among participants points to systemic overemphasis on achievement at the expense of emotional literacy. Gifted children internalize this academic pressure, interpreting mistakes as personal failure rather than part of growth. The reflection thus reveals that their struggles are not purely individual but symptomatic of broader educational structures that reward performance over self-understanding. The study's findings call attention to the need for educational cultures that normalize emotional expression and failure as part of learning, rather than marginalizing them in favor of perfectionism.

The implications of these findings extend across psychological, educational, and familial domains. At the psychological level, the study reinforces the necessity of early emotional assessment and counseling tailored to gifted children's asynchronous development. School counselors should be trained to recognize manifestations of emotional intensity and perfectionism as indicators of unmet developmental needs rather than behavioral problems. Educationally, the results advocate for the integration of social-emotional learning (SEL) frameworks within gifted programs to balance cognitive acceleration with emotional growth. For parents, the implications point toward fostering empathy, active listening, and validation of children's inner experiences. Collectively, these interventions emphasize prevention and guidance rather than remediation, aligning with holistic developmental principles.

The study also carries policy-level implications for gifted education. The evidence suggests that institutional approaches must evolve from a purely academic enrichment model to a comprehensive well-being framework. Curriculum design should include opportunities for emotional reflection, ethical inquiry, and collaborative learning to promote both intellectual and affective integration. Policies supporting professional development for teachers in affective pedagogy can bridge the gap between cognitive and emotional instruction. The results highlight that addressing gifted children's psychological needs is not supplementary but foundational to sustaining their motivation, creativity, and lifelong mental health.

The reasons underlying these findings can be traced to the neurocognitive and environmental interplay characteristic of giftedness. Neuroscientific studies indicate that heightened sensory and emotional processing in gifted individuals increases responsiveness to both positive and negative stimuli. This physiological sensitivity magnifies affective experiences, making emotional regulation more demanding. The cognitive complexity of gifted children also predisposes them to overanalyze social situations and internalize external criticism. When these tendencies intersect with environments that lack emotional scaffolding, the result is heightened self-consciousness and vulnerability. The study's findings thus reflect how neurobiological predispositions interact with psychosocial contexts to produce unique developmental profiles requiring specialized support.

The environmental component further explains the patterns observed. The imbalance between cognitive expectations and emotional readiness stems from societal pressures that equate giftedness with perfection. Children learn to measure self-worth by performance, amplifying stress and diminishing intrinsic motivation. Supportive environments that validate effort and emotional authenticity, however, transform these pressures into adaptive striving. The findings highlight that gifted children flourish when educators and caregivers cultivate acceptance of imperfection and model emotional resilience. The results therefore emphasize that addressing the "why" of gifted children's emotional challenges requires both neuroscientific understanding and ecological empathy.

The "Now-What" implications of this study propose concrete directions for research and practice. Future investigations should examine the long-term trajectories of gifted children's emotional development, particularly how early interventions influence adulthood adjustment. Expanding the cultural scope of research will also clarify how social norms shape the experience of giftedness in diverse societies. The study recommends the development of comprehensive counseling frameworks that integrate cognitive-behavioral techniques with affective education to help gifted children manage intensity constructively. Collaboration among psychologists, educators, and parents should become a standard component of gifted education programs.

The present findings also invite a redefinition of success within gifted education paradigms. Institutions must prioritize balanced growth over accelerated achievement, emphasizing emotional intelligence, ethical awareness, and interpersonal competence as markers of gifted development. Future educational practices should implement teacher training on asynchronous development and establish counseling protocols specifically designed for high-ability learners. By applying the insights from this research, educators and policymakers can foster environments where gifted children's intellect and emotions evolve in harmony, ensuring that their exceptional potential translates into fulfilled, resilient, and socially connected lives.

CONCLUSION

The most significant finding of this study lies in the identification of asynchronous development as the core mechanism that underpins the social-emotional challenges of gifted children. The data demonstrated that giftedness is characterized by an internal imbalance between advanced cognitive ability and comparatively slower emotional maturation, leading to heightened emotional intensity, perfectionism, and social incongruence. This study differs from previous research by reframing these traits not as deficits but as expressions of complex developmental processes that require intentional guidance. The evidence shows that emotional sensitivity, when properly supported, can serve as a foundation for empathy, moral awareness, and creative insight. This perspective positions emotional overexcitability as a developmental advantage rather than a vulnerability. The study thereby expands the conventional understanding of giftedness beyond intellect-centered frameworks to one that recognizes emotional and psychological depth as integral to gifted development.

The primary contribution of this research lies in its conceptual and methodological synthesis. Conceptually, the study advances the framework of *Holistic Gifted Development*, which integrates cognitive, affective, and social dimensions as interdependent components of giftedness. This model emphasizes that optimal development occurs through the alignment of intellectual stimulation with emotional nurturance and social belonging. Methodologically, the study contributes by applying a phenomenological approach that foregrounds children's voices and lived experiences, an area often neglected in gifted research dominated by quantitative assessment. Through triangulation of interviews, observations, and reflective journals, the study established an interpretive structure that captures the subjective realities of gifted children. This dual innovation in theory and method provides educators, psychologists, and policymakers with a more comprehensive lens to design interventions that address the whole child rather than isolated traits.

The limitations of this study primarily concern sample diversity and temporal scope. Participants were drawn from a limited number of educational institutions and represented predominantly middle-class urban settings, which may restrict the generalizability of findings across socioeconomic and cultural contexts. The cross-sectional nature of the research also constrained its ability to trace long-term developmental changes or evaluate the sustained impact of emotional interventions. Future research should adopt longitudinal and cross-cultural designs to examine how asynchronous development manifests over time and across varied cultural backgrounds. Expanding the scope to include perspectives from parents, teachers, and peers could further enrich understanding of the ecological systems influencing gifted children's well-being. Subsequent studies are encouraged to develop and test structured intervention models such as affective counseling frameworks or emotional literacy curricula aimed at translating the insights from this study into practical, scalable educational applications.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; Investigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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